

End of Reconstruction

MAIN IDEA

As white Southerners regained power, Reconstruction ended, as did black advances toward equality.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Reforms made during Reconstruction made later civil rights gains possible.

TERMS & NAMES

Fifteenth Amendment
Panic of 1873

Compromise of 1877

ONE AMERICAN'S STORY

Robert B. Elliott was a U.S. congressman from South Carolina during Reconstruction. In 1874, he made a speech in favor of a civil rights bill that would outlaw racial discrimination in public service.

A VOICE FROM THE PAST

The passage of this bill will determine the civil status, not only of the negro but of any other class of citizens who may feel themselves discriminated against. It will form the capstone of that temple of liberty begun on this continent.

Robert B. Elliott, quoted in *The Glorious Failure*

In 1877, federal troops left the South. White Southerners took back control of the region. Quickly, they forced African Americans, including Elliott, out of office. In Section 3, you will learn about the events that ended Reconstruction. You will also see how Reconstruction's end meant setbacks in the fight for civil rights.



Robert B. Elliott lost his political office when Reconstruction ended.

The Election of Grant

The Republican Party seemed stronger than ever in 1868. That year, its candidate, General Ulysses S. Grant, won the presidency. During the campaign, the Democrats attacked the Republicans' Reconstruction policies. They blamed the party for granting rights to African Americans.

On Election Day, however, the Republicans won. Grant received 214 electoral votes. His Democratic opponent received only 80. The popular count was much closer. Grant had a majority of only 306,000 votes.

Grant would not have had such a majority without the freedmen's vote. Despite attacks by the Ku Klux Klan, about 500,000 African Americans voted in the South. Most cast their ballots for Grant.

Taking Notes

Use your chart to take notes about voting.

Problems

Black codes	→
President Johnson	→
Education	→
Economy	→
Ku Klux Klan	→
Voting	→

Now and then

AFRICAN AMERICANS IN CONGRESS

Between 1870 and 1877, 16 African Americans served in Congress. Seven are shown in the picture below. Two were senators: Hiram R. Revels and Blanche K. Bruce, both of whom were from Mississippi.

In 1999, there were 38 African Americans in Congress. The longest-serving member was John Conyers, a representative from Michigan elected in 1964. Only two African-American senators were elected in the 20th century. Massachusetts senator Edward W. Brooke served from 1967 to 1979. Illinois senator Carol Moseley-Braun served from 1993 to 1999.



The Fifteenth Amendment

After Grant's victory, Radical Republicans worried that the Southern states might try to keep African Americans from voting in future elections. To prevent this, Radical leaders proposed a new constitutional amendment.

The **Fifteenth Amendment** stated that citizens could not be stopped from voting "on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude." (This amendment, like the Fourteenth Amendment, did not apply to Native Americans on tribal lands.) The amendment was ratified in 1870.

The Fifteenth Amendment was not aimed only at the South. African-American men could not vote in 16 states. "We have no moral right to impose an obligation on one part of the land which the rest will not accept," one Radical wrote. With the Fifteenth Amendment, the nation again turned toward democracy.

The Fifteenth Amendment did not apply to women. This made many white women angry. Why couldn't they vote when black men—former slaves—could? Suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton protested the idea of uneducated immigrants and freedmen "who never read the Declaration of Independence" making laws for educated white women. Most African-American women were not as angry. To Frances E. W. Harper, a black suffragist and writer, it was important for African Americans to gain voting rights, even if that meant only men at first.

Reading History

A. Comparing

How was the Fifteenth Amendment a step beyond the Fourteenth Amendment?

Vocabulary

suffragist: someone who favors equal voting rights, especially for women

Grant Fights the Klan

Despite gaining the vote, African Americans in the South continued to be terrorized by the Ku Klux Klan. In 1871, to stop the terror, President Grant asked Congress to pass a tough law against the Klan. Joseph Rainey, a black congressman from South Carolina, had received death threats from the Klan. He urged his fellow lawmakers to support the bill.

A VOICE FROM THE PAST

When myself and colleagues shall leave these Halls and turn our footsteps toward our southern home we know not but that the assassin may await our coming. Be it as it may we have resolved to be loyal and firm, and if we perish, we perish! I earnestly hope the bill will pass.

Joseph Rainey, quoted in *The Trouble They Seen*

Congress approved the anti-Klan bill. Federal marshals then arrested thousands of Klansmen. Klan attacks on African-American voters declined. As a result, the 1872 presidential election was both fair and peaceful in the South. Grant won a second term.

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ReadingHistory

B. Making

Inferences How
did Republican
scandals hurt
Reconstruction?

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Scandal and Panic Weaken Republicans

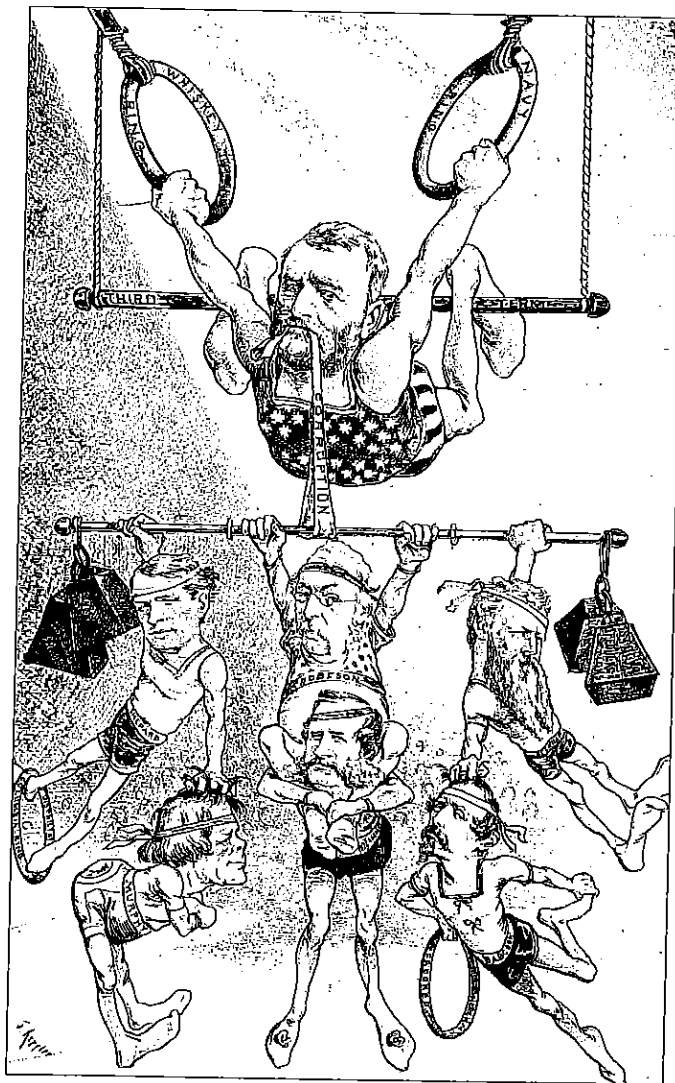
Under the Grant administration, support for the Republicans and Reconstruction weakened. Scandals hurt the administration and caused divisions in the Republican Party. A financial panic further hurt the Republicans and turned the country's attention away from Reconstruction.

President Grant did not choose his advisers well. He put his former army friends and his wife's relatives in government positions. Many of these people were unqualified. Some Grant appointees took bribes. Grant's private secretary, for instance, took money from whiskey distillers who wanted to avoid paying taxes. Grant's secretary of war, General William Belknap, left office after people accused him of taking bribes.

Such scandals deeply outraged many Republicans. In 1872, some Republican officials broke away and formed the new Liberal Republican Party. The Republicans, no longer unified, became less willing to impose tough Reconstruction policies on the South.

In 1873, political corruption and Republican quarreling gave way to a more serious problem. When several powerful Eastern banks ran out of money after making bad loans, a financial panic swept the country. In the **Panic of 1873**, banks across the land closed. The stock market temporarily collapsed. The panic caused an economic depression, a time of low business activity and high unemployment. The railroad industry, which relied on banks for loans, suffered. Within a year, 89 of the country's 364 railroads went broke. Railroad failures left Midwestern farmers with no way to move their crops, and many farmers were ruined.

The depression, which lasted about five years, touched nearly all parts of the economy. By 1875, more than 18,000 companies had folded. Hundreds of workers had lost their jobs. Many Americans blamed the crisis on the Republicans—the party in power. As a result, Democrats won victories in the 1874 congressional and state elections. In the middle of the depression, **Americans** grew tired of hearing about the South's problems. The nation was losing interest in Reconstruction.



This cartoon from Puck magazine shows President Grant weighed down by corruption in his administration.

ReadingHistory

Recognizing

Effects What
resulted from the
Panic of 1873?

Supreme Court Reversals

To make matters worse for the Republicans, the Supreme Court began to undo some of the changes that had been made in the South. In an 1876 case, *U.S. v. Cruikshank*, the Court ruled that the federal government could not punish individuals who violated the civil rights of African Americans. Only the states had that power, the Court declared. Southern state officials often would not punish those who attacked African Americans. As a result, violence against them increased.

In the 1876 case *U.S. v. Reese*, the Court ruled in favor of white Southerners who barred African Americans from voting. The Court stated that the Fifteenth Amendment did not give everyone the right to vote—it merely listed the grounds on which states could not deny the vote. In other words, states could prevent African Americans from voting for other reasons. States later imposed poll taxes and literacy tests to restrict the vote. These Court decisions weakened Reconstruction and blocked African-American efforts to gain full equality.

ReadingHistory

D. Recognizing Effects

How did the Reese and Cruikshank rulings affect African Americans' efforts to gain civil rights?

Reconstruction Ends

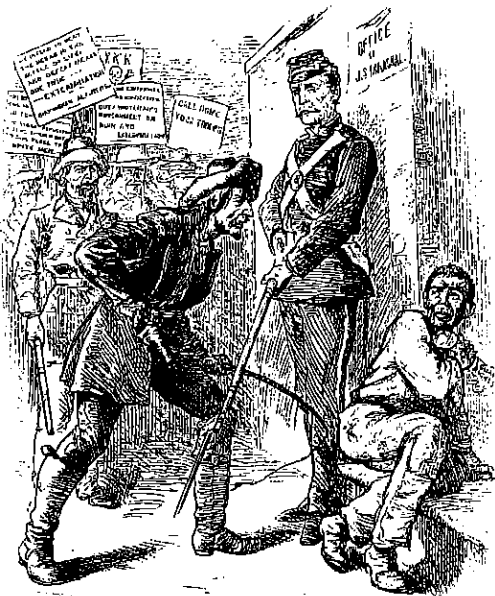
The final blow to Reconstruction came with the 1876 presidential election. The Democrats nominated Samuel J. Tilden, governor of New York. The Republicans chose Rutherford B. Hayes, governor of Ohio. The race was very close. Victory depended on the electoral votes of South Carolina, Louisiana, and Florida. The votes in those states were so close

that both the Democrats and the Republicans claimed victory. A special commission of eight Republicans and seven Democrats made a deal. Under the **Compromise of 1877**, Hayes became president. In return, the Republicans compromised with the Southern Democrats on several issues.

1. The government would remove federal troops from the South.
2. The government would provide land grants and loans for the construction of railroads linking the South to the West Coast.
3. Southern officials would receive federal funds for construction and improvement projects.
4. Hayes would appoint a Democrat to his cabinet.
5. The Democrats promised to respect African Americans' civil and political rights.

ReadingHistory

E. Summarizing
What events led to a weakening of support for Reconstruction?



This cartoon from *Harper's Weekly* shows a federal soldier as the freedman's only defense against white Southerners.

Abolitionist Wendell Phillips was against the compromise. He doubted that the South would respect black rights. "The whole soil of the South is hidden by successive layers of broken promises," he said. "To trust a Southern promise would be fair evidence of insanity."

After the 1876 presidential election, the Reconstruction governments in the South collapsed. The Democrats returned to power, believing that they were the redeemers, or rescuers, of the South.

Reconstruction: Civil Rights Amendments and Laws

Civil Rights Act of 1866

- Granted citizenship and equal rights to all persons born in the United States (except Native Americans)

Fourteenth Amendment (1868)

- Granted citizenship and equal protection of the laws to all persons born in the United States (except Native Americans)

Fifteenth Amendment (1870)

- Protected the voting rights of African Americans

Civil Rights Act of 1875

- Outlawed racial segregation in public services
- Ensured the right of African Americans to serve as jurors

SKILLBUILDER Interpreting Charts

1. Which amendment and law are most similar?
2. Which amendment specifically protects voting rights?

The Legacy of Reconstruction

Historians still argue about the success of Reconstruction. The nation did rebuild and reunite. However, Reconstruction did not achieve equality for African Americans.

After Reconstruction, most African Americans still lived in poverty. Legally, they could vote and hold public office. But few took part in politics. They continued to face widespread violence and prejudice.

During this period, however, African Americans did make lasting gains. Protection of civil rights became part of the U.S. Constitution. The Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments would provide a legal basis for civil rights laws of the 20th century. Black schools and churches begun during Reconstruction also endured. Reconstruction changed society, putting African Americans on the path toward full equality. In the next unit, you will learn about other changes in American society after the Civil War.

3 Assessment

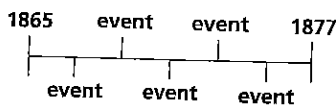
1. Terms & Names

Explain the significance of:

- Fifteenth Amendment
- Panic of 1873
- Compromise of 1877

2. Using Graphics

Review the chapter and find five significant individuals and events to place on a time line as shown.



Which event or person was most important and why?

3. Main Ideas

- a. What did the Fifteenth Amendment declare?
- b. What effect did scandals in the Grant administration have on the Republican Party?
- c. What demands did Southern Democrats make in the Compromise of 1877?

4. Critical Thinking

Drawing Conclusions

Why do you think the Republicans were willing to agree to the Compromise of 1877 and end Reconstruction?

THINK ABOUT

- the election of 1876
- the Panic of 1873
- the Supreme Court rulings

ACTIVITY OPTIONS

IMAGE ARTS

DRAMA

Research Ku Klux Klan activities barring African Americans from voting. Then write a protest letter to the editor or propose a law to protect voting rights.

